

The New Coup in Saigon By Chalmers M. Roberts

A U.S. Withdrawal or a New Rationale?

Once again the proclaimed American objective in South Viet-Nam has been derailed by a military coup. If that publicly proclaimed objective remains United States policy, the eventual outcome is likely to be an American military withdrawal.



Roberts

President Johnson several times has stated that the U.S. is in Viet-Nam today in accordance with a letter from former President Eisenhower to Ngo Dinh Diem, the leader slain in the 1963 coup. The point then was, and it remains so today, that the U.S. is there at Vietnamese request to aid the Vietnamese in defending themselves against a Communist attack, run and controlled by the North Vietnamese regime in Hanoi.

A corollary of this policy has been American insistence on a regime in Saigon that is broadly based and civilian-led. Up to Wednes-

day Premier Tran Van Huong was considered a satisfactory civilian leader. Now he is gone by military order.

The U.S. has been insis-
tent on a civilian-headed
regime though more and
more the reality has been a
military-controlled nation.
The U.S. has never been
willing to see a centralized
military dictatorship in
charge, although it might
more effectively prosecute
the war and although the
U.S. has been able to live
with many such regimes in
other nations.

We may be near the point when that is the only choice though new civilian trapplings may be created by the

generals to win our continued assent and aid.

Another aspect of the American posture is the uncertainty of the objective of United States policy in South Viet-Nam. Are we really there just because a Saigon government asked for our help?

Some very high American officials believe we are there, fundamentally, as part of a necessity to contain aggressive Chinese expansionism. President Johnson has never spoken out on this subject but he appears to believe that the necessity of containing China is, indeed, a major factor in our posture there as elsewhere in Asia.

Nixon Offers a Plan to Isolate Viet Cong

NEW YORK, Jan. 27 (UPI)Sales Executive Club of New York yesterday that the United States must "quarantine" the Communists if the United States Air Force and Navy cut Communist supply lines to South Viet-Nam war is to be won. Viet-Nam and destroy Communist staging areas in Northchanged," he said, "we will Viet-Nam even if it might riskbe thrown out in a matter of months—certainly within a Nixon told a meeting of theyear."

A great deal of the public confusion here at home, including that in Congress, derives from uncertainty as to just why we are in South Viet-Nam. Much of the talk of getting out is based on the Administration's public statements that we are there only to help the Vietnamese at their request.

Hence, this line of argument goes, why stay to help a country that cannot form a stable government? If the American objective is not further defined in the American rather than the Vietnamese interest, this sort of talk will steadily grow into formidable pressure on the President to take his losses and quit the game.

If the American objective relates only to South Viet-Nam, a case can be made for a try at a negotiated withdrawal. But if the Administration believes much more is involved, if it is true that Viet-Nam is but a piece of a far larger mosaic, it would be folly to leave.

It is simply not enough to say, as Assistant Secretary of State William P. Bundy said last Saturday, that "we must persist in our efforts there, with patience

... R THURSDAY

A black and white portrait of a man with a receding hairline, wearing glasses, and a mustache. He is looking slightly to the right of the frame. The image is grainy and appears to be from a newspaper or magazine.

Associated Pre

PREMIER HOVEIDA
... presents Cabinet

rather than petulance, coolness rather than recklessness, and with a continuing ability to separate the real from the merely wished-for."

The Administration itself must make that separation—and tell the public what it concludes and why, if we are to stay on in Viet-Nam.

Penney's

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